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FESTIVALS & CELEBRATIONS

Rockin' Fort Leonard Wood

BGEA SERVES THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE OUR COUNTRY

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October 7, 2009 - You have to check out what happened on a sunny Sunday in the heartland! Rock the Fort was created as a way to serve our military with a hefty dose of rock and hip hop, and an intense, eternal message.

by Janet Chismar

On a sunny autumn afternoon, more than 2,000 soldiers, families and community members gathered at Fort Leonard Wood to hear some great music and, most importantly, some Great News.

Rock the Fort, an event modeled after this summer's [Rock the River](#) concerts, brought hip hop artist Canton Jones, youth communicator Matt Pitt, Christian rock band Disciple and evangelist RV Brown to the Missouri military base on October 4.

By the end of the afternoon, more than 200 people made decisions for Christ; 123 accepted Him as their Savior for the first time.

"Rock the Fort is a great example of viral ministry," says Duane Gaylord, vice president of television, film and internet for the BGEA. "There were soldiers, some as young as 17- or 18-years old, who heard about Jesus for the first time and made a decision right there. Within weeks, they could be shipped off to Afghanistan. These soldiers will now be equipped to face very stressful situations in a potentially dangerous environment."

J. Walker Clarke, director of program for the BGEA, explains the "heart" behind the event: "Boot camp is one of the most physically, emotionally, and spiritually vulnerable times of a soldier's life. We wanted to do something for them that not only would be fun, but would also share the Gospel. This is a way to serve the young men and women who have put themselves out there and serve our country."

Chaplain (LTC) Michael Thomas, who serves the men and women at Fort Leonard Wood, was instrumental in connecting the BGEA with the base. He credits the communities surrounding the base with helping to make Rock the Fort a success.

"The surrounding community was incredible," he explains. "Because of our need to have counselors, my team went to local churches, invited them to be part of the event, and asked them to come to counselor training. The outpouring was great. People came and received the training. The next day, they were there and ready to help soldiers during Rock the Fort."

Prayer played a huge role before and during the event. Carol Hudler, the director of religious education at Fort Leonard Wood, organized prayer vigils and walks, wrote a prayer blog, and led a team that prayed throughout the day.



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MULTIMEDIA

PHOTO GALLERY
[Rock the Fort](#)

VIDEO
[Rock the Fort](#)

Thomas looks at both the initial and long-term impact for the soldiers: "Knowing that they are now in the Lord's hands and have a relationship with Jesus Christ is everything. The carry over, of course, will happen in the next few months. Several of these soldiers will be in very scary situations. They know to whom they belong. They know whose they are now. It will give them confidence and strength."

"The spirit of God moved in a big way," Thomas adds. "We were astounded. When people were given the opportunity to respond, knees buckled. Even two days later, when I tell those who could not attend about the event, they react with tears and a sense of joy."

Photos by Gerik Parmele, courtesy of Decision Magazine. © 2009 BGEA

2009 ROCK THE RIVER EVENTS:

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[St. Louis](#)

[Baton Rouge](#)

The current Billy Graham TV Special also features Rock the River.

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1 COMMENTS

Sue says *9.25.2010, 09:35 a.m.*

This is awesome... Our soldiers need this positive arena.... they go through so much and being in this spiritual environment does no harm!! God bless our troops!!

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